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A New Careers demonstration project (to develop nonprofessional or aide jobs for 150 underprivileged Negro youth in the health, education, and welfare complex in Washington, D.C.) was examined to observe the reaction of professionals who deliver human and social services when indigenous nonprofessionals are employed to work with them. Issues and related questions emerging from this experience are examined in terms of the implications for the delivery of social services. It was expected that nonprofessionals would further professional effectiveness by freeing the professionals to perform those tasks which require a high degree of skill and by improving service accessibility through their link with an alienated population. In most cases supervisory and inservice training needs of the nonprofessional enveloped most of the professional time and energy that might have been utilized in giving increased service. Three central dilemmas relative to the professional role will require more intensive study: (1) dual demand on the professional to deliver more high-quality service and simultaneously become skilled in the art of supervising the nonprofessional; (2) formulation of inservice training policy that arises from the needs of indigenous workers for intensive training and the needs of professionals for retaining; (3) maintenance and/or enhancement of quality of service and also response to the ever-increasing demand for social coverage. (JS)

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IMPACT OF THE INDIGENOUS NONPROFESSIONAL ON THE PROFESSIONAL'S ROLE

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This paper was presented at the National Association of Social Workers Symposium, "Human Services and Professional Responsibility," in San Francisco on May 24, 1968. At that time, Dr. Denham was associate director of training at the Area B Center for Mental Health, jointly sponsored by Howard University and the Washington, D.C. Department of Public Health. At present Dr. Denham is professor of social work at Federal City College, and Mrs. Shatz is director of training, University Research Corporation, Washington, D.C.

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New Careers Information Clearinghouse
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New Careers is an innovative approach to job development, training, education, employment, and career development in the human services for the underemployed and the unemployed. The program was conceived as a solution to the needs both of the disadvantaged for training, jobs, and careers, and of human service agencies for the manpower required to deliver improved and increased human services. Through New Careers training, people from disadvantaged backgrounds are prepared to take permanent jobs in human service agencies. Employing agencies and educational institutions collaborate in developing realistic career opportunities for trainees, improved use of manpower, and more effective services.

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This paper reports selected highlights of a demonstration project involving the use of indigenous workers in the human service agencies of Washington, D.C. Specifically, it will discuss the reaction of professionals operating at the delivery level to the introduction of indigenous nonprofessionals and issues and related questions emerging from this experience in terms of their implications for the delivery of human services in general and social services in particular.

The New Careers project was an experimental effort primarily based on opportunity theory.[1] It involved the development and implementation of a system of occupational opportunity for some 150 underprivileged youths and young adults, virtually all of whom were Negro. The system consisted of a two-pronged effort: (1) the development of a series of nonprofessional or aide jobs in the health, education, and welfare complex in Washington and (2) the selection, training, and placement of enrollees in the jobs. The emphasis in this paper is on the former. In the process, approximately ten nonprofessional job specialties were developed for that number of human service agencies.[2]

The project lacked the resources that might have enabled systematic monitoring and analysis of role behavior. This problem, coupled with the fact that these programs were in the earliest stage of development,

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1. Richard A. Cloward and Lloyd E. Ohlin, Delinquency and Opportunity (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1960).
2. Positions developed included neighborhood workers and aides in day care, residential counseling, schools, nursing, geriatrics, recreation, and social service or case assistance. Participating agencies included the local school system; welfare, recreation, and health Departments; and the Community Action Program and its delegate agencies (public and voluntary).

suggests that the ensuing material should be viewed as a tentative and impressionistic indicator of what promises to be a movement of major significance in the human service field.

Expectations for Professional Role Change

A major argrument for the presumed benefits from use of indigenous nonprofessionals is that it will lead to more effective use of professional personnel. Effective use means that the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are inculcated into the professional through university education and training should be more directly and consistently utilized in improving service to people. The nonprofessional is seen as furthering professional effectiveness in two ways: (1) freeing the professional to perform more consistently those tasks proscribed in his role that require a high degree of skill, or (2) enabling him to experiment with and develop new tasks that could enhance the quality of his output. These purposes can be achieved by defining the nonprofessional role so that it serves either of two functions--maintaining or strengthening existing service delivery systems or changing them.

Maintaining or strengthening existing systems. This is achieved primarily through the mechanism of task relief, which means relieving the professional of tasks for which undergraduate or graduate social work training and education are not required and incorporating such tasks into the nonprofessional role. In this context the core functions of the professional are kept intact regardless of whether they involve direct serv-

ice and/or supervisory activities. Supposedly the basic output of the professional will be enhanced by maximal and skillful performance of central functions as a result of his being relieved of peripheral or ancillary tasks.

Changing the system. The main change envisioned here is the improvement of service accessibility, defined as the means whereby the service products of an agency are offered in way that will maximize acceptance of them or use by potential clients. The principal vehicle for making service more available is the nonprofessional worker and the qualities allegedly resulting from his being indigenous--"psychosocial antennae" that enable him to reach out to an alienated population with a variety of tangible provisions. These might include giving information about agency service, rendering simple direct service aimed either at meeting clients' immediate needs for concrete help or motivating them toward more extensive relationships with the agency for assistance with complex problem, and referring clients to appropriate services when host agencies are unable to meet the expressed need.

In this model, the nonprofessional operates as a practitioner. The primacy of the professional as the person in charge of the service deliverly unit is secured, but his role is expanded to include a number of additional functions, depending on the nature of the service and how the role is defined. For example, the professional may function as an expert practitioner handling the most complex or demanding situations; he may become the team diagnostician, evaluator, or consultant; he may be ex-

pected to assume major responsibility for staff development and training; or any combination of these.

In addition to the expected alterations in professional role, two additional outcomes were anticipated by virtue of the professional's confrontation with the poor as co-workers rather than as service recipients. First, it was expected that the professionals would experience considerable role crisis as they were forced to determine what their attitudes and behavior toward the aides ought to be. Second, it was hoped that professionals would become resensitized to the needs and values of the indigenous worker and, conversely, that the nonprofessionals would develop more objective perceptions of human service professionals to counteract prevailing negative opinions about them and their agencies. This reciprocal sensitization was seen as reducing the social distance or alienation between these two categories of worker.

Before describing the outcome of tnese expectations it must be pointed out that virtually all of programs using indigenous nonprofessionals suffered from minimal operational clarity, which was typical of demonstrations at the early stage in the antipoverty effort. Goals were still being articulated in funding proposals. In addition, programs frequently were impelled by political forces to begin operations without adequate staffing, structure, or administration. Consequently, role expectations of all staff, who were caught up in what was often a maelstrom of innovation and confusion, were inevitably fluid and changing.

Outcomes

In comparing the expected changes in the professional's role with what actually occurred, it was found that outcomes varied, depending on the predominance of three circumstances governing the use of indigenous nonprofessionals by the agencies: (1) situations in which indigenous workers were used to fill existing vacancies at the nonprofessional level, (2) when new positions for such workers were created to maximize the output of the professionals, or (3) when nonprofessionals were being used as part of a new approach to service delivery.

Impact and Reactions

In those instances in which trainees were used primarily to fill existing vacancies, the formal content of the professional role remained constant. The only change in occupational policy involved the adjustment of entry criteria to enable the hiring of aides. While there was no formal transfer of tasks from the professional to the nonprofessional, it was initially speculated that to a significant degree the professional would be relieved of performance of various lower-level tasks, thus increasing the time spent in direct practice, since he would no longer have to substitute for the nonprofessional. This, however, did not occur for a totally unexpected reason: in these agencies the shortage of nonprofessional staff had been so chronic as to have virtually become an integral aspect of the institutional culture. The professionals having to fill in for the nonprofessionals had little opportunity to use, let alone develop,

the more highly technical skills usually required of such workers. Rather, they had become accustomed to performing routine functions.

For example, in the welfare counselor aide training program, the senior supervisory counselors in cottages to which the aides were assigned were for the first time in their employment required to function as training supervisors--a task that, although formally a part of their job description, had never been performed substantially or consistently. In most instances this responsibility was apparently beyond the competence of the supervisors. They reacted to this crisis with considerable anxiety, much of which was displaced on the aides, who were accused of being troublemakers and interfering with the old order. In other instances, when junior cottage staff complained about the aides, they were advised by the supervisor that the aides were only "temporary," the insinuation being that they would be replaced. The tension experienced by the professional over his deficiencies in supervisory skills was exacerbated by the inability of the agency to provide him with any support through staff training or development geared to the supervisory functions.

Agencies that tended to regard their manpower interests as being served by creating new roles for indigenous nonprofessionals were inclined to the view that more effective use of professional staff could be effected through the task-relief strategy, and the nonprofessionals' jobs were defined on this basis. However, in all such instances no

formal restatement of professionals' duties or reallocation of their time responsibilities occurred. Furthermore, it was also expected informally that the professional would have major responsibility for supervising the nonprofessional. But here again, no administrative back-up in the form of interpretation or training was ever provided. Consequently, the professional practitioner, given this new responsibility, in most instances had to perform it on a trial-and-error basis.

This was especially striking in the program that involved the training of school aides in the District of Columbia school system. Throughout the program, teachers grappled with but did not resolve such dilemma as these: Were they to act as foremen, teachers, or supervisors vis-a-vis the aides? What repertoire of skills did they need to develop for what seemed to be a multidimensional role? How could the time demands inherent in aide supervision be reconciled with the learning needs of the class (an especially cogent issue since the addition of the auxiliary staff was supposed to provide more teaching time)? Should they give greater emphasis to such activities as curriculum development and evaluation, differential teaching methods, and so on? If so, were their skills adequate for these new challenges and if they were not, could this be acknowledged without jeopardizing professional reputations?

The expectation that additional time would accrue to the professional for performance of previously undone tasks requiring a high

degree of skill or the assumption of new tasks was not realized in any patterned or sustained fashion. Here again, the major operative factor was the urgency of the new demand on the professional to supervise the indigenous worker. This, combined with the anxiety and uncertaintly generated by the needs of such workers, seemed to absorb the energies of the professionals and cancel out the additional time that in theory might have been saved.

In situations in which nonprofessional positions were established as part of a new approach to service delivery, functional alterations in the professional role were primarily oriented to developing the nonprofessional role. The supervisory needs of the nonprofessionals were ubiquitous and virtually enveloped most of the professional time and energy that might have been utilized in giving service.

An added factor that further reduced the operating scope of the professional was the absence of any defined guidelines for his own role. Most official descriptions of the professional job in these programs were couched in unusually vague or ambiguous terms. In most instances the job descriptions gave professionals responsibility for supervision and/or in-service training of indigenous staff and held them accountable for insuring that service was dispensed as expeditiously and fully as possible. Beyond this it was "every professional for himself" as far as determining what the nature of his other responsibilities in the area of service might be.

What is being argued here is not that professional role descriptions should be rigid. Quite the contrary--such descriptions should be

developed in such a way as to allow professionals considerable discretion in selecting options for action. However, sound personnel policy requires that job descriptions provide reasonable direction to employees in the performance of tasks and responsibilities. This was not the case for most professional roles in the project. They were labeled rather than defined. Thus, whether intentionally or not, the nonprofessional in most of these programs functioned as the exclusive given of service. In effect, he became the practitioner, carrying major responsibility for both rendering whatever service could be rendered and making it available to clients.

The professional reacted to these unanticipated developments with considerable tension and anxiety, which was often dysfunctional as far as the viability of the nonprofessional role was concerned. There was considerable acting out by professionals against the aides in such ways as threatening them with overly subjective and negative evaluations, limiting the aide's role to the more menial tasks; or "caseworking" the aide in an attempt to reverse his role from worker to client.

These factors of preoccupation with the supervisory component, ambiguity in the definition of role, and the resultant conflict engendered led to the speculation that no appreciable increase in the professional's involvement with service activities occurred. As far as accessibility of service was concerned, this was increased in many instances. However, it represented service that was made available and rendered primarily through the efforts of the nonprofessional. Quite

apart from how effective such service was in meeting client need, its significance lay in the fact that it represented a new product without the traditional professional label.

Social Distance

The question of whether the interaction between professionals and nonprofessionals led to a reduction of social distance between them can be examined from the standpoint of the mutual expectations of each group. In the project it was noted that expectations of the professional by the nonprofessional tended to be expressed in terms of concrete needs. The latter was in an occupationally dependent position vis-a-vis the professional. As a subordinate in the relationship, he tended to look for five kinds of helping inputs from the professional: (1) help in surviving in a highly tenuous role; (2) help in developing practical skills and acquiring knowledge to meet the task requirements; (3) help in learning to negotiate his way in the agency; (4) help in realizing his aspirations for advancement in the event he was motivated in this direction; (5) respect, support, and recognition as a worker with the rights and privileges attendant thereto.

The expectations of professionals in relation to indigenous workers can be described as polarized along a continuum consisting of the "doubters" on one hand and the "idealists" on the other. The doubters were those professionals who tended to have low expectations of the aides' potential for making a significant contribution to service de-

livery. They tended to cast nonprofessionals in the roles of dependent clients or handymen in the service of the professionals. In this context the workers often reacted by assuming roles to fit the supervisors' expectations, thus creating a vicious circle. For example, in the teacher aide program one teacher tended to treat her aide as an overgrown student instead of a classroom assistant. Fairly early in his experience the aide perceived what was expected of him, and he played the role to the hilt. The result was that the teacher received little in the way of concrete help from him, and he regarded himself as a failure as a classroom assistant.

At the opposite end of the spectrum were the idealists, who had inordinately high--in some cases unlimited--expectations of aides' capacities. Virtually all regarded the aides as practitioners. This included teachers who, in effect, believed that the aides could perform instructional tasks indiscriminately; caseworkers who voiced expectations that aides could perform intensive therapy, and so on. They seemed to view the worker as a "noble savage," who, by virtue of being poor and minimally educated, could outperform the professional, while at the same time retaining his identity as a nonprofessional person with roots in the client population. One consequence of this kind of approach was that the aide was continually expected to produce beyond his capacity. When he failed, the supervisor frequently became disenchanted. As a result, neither party got what he wanted. The aide received neither realistic nor practical skills and knowledge and the supervisor did not get the "all-American

indigenous worker."

A fairly sizable subgroup of idealists were those professionals whose perceptions of their role can best be described as "warriors in the War on Poverty." They were inclined to view the nonprofessionals as potential allies in a struggle to change the human service Establishment. In many instances, the aims of these professionals was to effect change in the total agency in which service delivery was an incidental element. Concomitant with their interest in broad-scale organizational change, these professionals also operated as advocates of the aides vis-a-vis their attempts to become integrated in the system.

An intermediate point on the spectrum was a third group consisting of professionals who might be termed "pragmatic experimentalists." These were individuals who, although committed to the acceptance of the nonprofessional's potential, took the approach that at this juncture no one could realistically "know" what that potential was, but that it should be tested out. They were inclined more consistently to orient their behavior to meeting the learning needs of the nonprofessionals as indicated in the job definitions and to try to evaluate performance on the basis of what was done on the job rather than on what ideally could have been done.

It is apparent that there was dissonance between the expectations of many professionals and nonprofessionals. The expectations of the latter were couched in visceral and concrete terms. They viewed viewed themselves as consumers of the commodities or resources that professionals were supposed to supply and that they needed in order to get occupational

footholds in the agency. In many cases they did not appear to share the ideological interests of the professionals or wish to enter into a compact to change systems.

On the basis of this experience, the authors would suggest that the concept of social distance as it is presumed to exist between the professional and the nonprofessional is too abstract and somewhat irrelevant in terms of the current economic and social status of most indigenous workers. The nonprofessional may not necessarily be looking for a relationship with the professional or interested in becoming the answer to the technical problems of service delivery. Rather, he is more likely to be concerned with getting as much concrete assistance from the professional as possible in terms of his needs for employment survival, stability, and advancement. It might be hypothesized that to the extent these needs can be responded to by the professional and to the extent that the professional can receive satisfaction from satisfying these needs, the social distance between the two parties is apt to lessen. This, then, may lead to the creation of a partnership base from which it is hoped new and more effective service can be planned and developed.

Dilemmas and Questions

Although the aforementioned outcomes must be recognized as tentative, they raise at least three central dilemmas relative to the professional role that will require more intensive study as future experience unfolds:

1. Dual demand on the professional to deliver more high-quality service and simultaneously become skilled in the art of supervising the

nonprofessional. Can typically practitioner-oriented human service professionals such as social workers and teachers be expected to accommodate effectively such demands? Can it be assumed that competence in practice is synonymous with competence in supervision? Is this perhaps an example of the "Peter Principle," wherein professionals are frequently expected to assume functions regardless of their abilities or inclinations?[3]

2. Formulation of in-service training policy that arises from the needs of indigenous workers for intensive training and the needs of professionals for retraining. Can agencies simultaneously respond to both pressures? If not, which combinations of "inside" (i.e., intra-agency) and "outside" (extra-agency) training and/or education for the indigenous nonprofessional are feasible in terms of costs and service production needs? A similar question might be raised in relation to the professional and his needs for retraining to meet not only the special learning and developmental requirements of nonprofessionals, but also to prepare himself for new professional tasks.

3. Maintaining and/or enhancing quality of service and also re-

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3. Laurence J. Peter, "The Peter Principle," Esquire, Vol. 67, No. 1 (January, 1967), pp. 76 - 77. According to the author, the promotion process in occupational life inevitably "develops, perpetuates and rewards incompetence." Each employee tends to be promoted until he reaches a level at which he is not wholly competent (but not incompetent enough to be discharged), at which point he becomes frozen. The employee who is capable at one level frequently is found incompetent at a higher level. This principle was applied to social work by Robert M. Webb, "The 'Peter Principle' Applied to Social Work," Personnel Information, Vol 10, No. 2 (March, 1967), pp. 2, 3, 46 - 48.

ponding to the ever increasing demand for service coverage. What are the risks to professional standards of service in increased use of indigenous workers in practice roles? How can service units that include both professional and nonprofessional practitioners combine their talents in the interest of better service coverage? Or are there certain kinds of programs serving certain kinds of clients in which the service-rendering unit might be so designed as to place the indigenous nonprofessional in the primary practitioner role and under professional supervision? If so, what are such programs and what are the needs of the specific clientele?

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